

out

from

beneath

the  
boot

**LET'S SEE, I CALLED TO MY TRIBE...**

*Let's see, I called to my tribe and said: let's see,  
whoever we are, whatever we do, whatever we think.  
The palest of them, of us,  
Answered me with other eyes,  
with another injustice, with his flag.  
That was the enemy camp.  
Maybe that man had the right  
to kill my truth, that's what happened  
to me and to my father, and so it goes on.  
But I suffered as if they bit me.*

from **The Bell and the Sea**, Pablo Neruda 1973  
Translated by John Manson

# OUT FROM BENEATH THE BOOT :

## Number 3

EDITED BY JIM FERGUSON

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## INTRODUCTION

This edition of **Out From Beneath The Boot** contains no poetry or prose about trees, flowers, abstract philosophical argument, or aesthetics. Any arguments about aesthetics are inherent in the work. It does contain writing by folk who have strong opinions about what is happening with and to human beings in the world. It is generally left wing, though not exclusively, and unlikely to make comfortable reading for the average political party hack, academics interested in apolitical literary theories, or indeed any supporter of present Western elite power structures. Although masochistic folk from the above mentioned might get a certain kick. Especially those lucky enough to work for the forces of censorship and state security, eg. The Daily Record, HM Inspectorate of Schools MI5 etc. I hope folk find something thought provoking, moving or plain different within these covers.

### Pablo Neruda, 1904 - 1973: a life of struggle

Pablo Neruda, the internationally acclaimed Chilean poet, died on the 23rd of September 1973. This edition is intended, in a small way, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the poet's death.

Neruda was both a lyric poet and a poet of fierce political commitment. He was deeply influenced by the Spanish civil war and the murder of his friend Federico Garcia Lorca. From 1936 onwards he tried to address a wider public, rather than seeing poetry as an elite pursuit of the rich and educated.

In 1945 he joined the Chilean Communist Party and was elected Senator for the Tarapaca and Antofagasta provinces. These inhospitable desert provinces were dominated by the copper and nitrate mining industries. From 1949 to 1952 Neruda was forced into exile by the corrupt government of Gabriel Gonzales.

Always prolific, his work was translated into many languages and in 1971 he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature. He died shortly after the coup in Chile which ousted and murdered

Allende. His funeral became one of the first demonstrations against the military government; he died and was buried as he had lived - fighting for socialism, peace and justice.

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## Alison Reid

### she will no doubt learn

she will no doubt learn  
to cry in foreign tongue  
to ask for drugs  
to salve the pain  
she will no doubt learn  
that people are the same  
no matter where they come from  
or what their crime  
she will no doubt learn  
that in this race  
only the rats survive  
and so she'll hide in the sewers  
like the rest  
fur matted, swollen bellied  
trusting no-one  
she will no doubt learn  
that in such a place  
truth is ruthless  
and afraid,  
she will no doubt learn  
that, in such a place  
dreams are useless

## Stella Coombe

### BANGLADESH

One banana, two bananas, three bananas, four bananas. The insertion of fruit ensures I don't go too fast or slow, each digit couple with a banana denoting one second. Usually I get bored around two hundred and odds, then I'll start to pace up and down the platform instead, trying not to look at my watch too often. I light another cigarette and inspect my shoes as I inspect the platform, counting how many size eights fit into each flagstone, kicking stones, avoiding cracks and eyes.

Time is money, if I weren't so proud I'd be crossing the tracks, collecting up the discarded Irn bru bottles from the undergrowth opposite. One pound twenty's worth visible to my naked eye, probably more with a little scrabbling. I can't be bothered and begin counting again, waiting for the train to arrive.

There's a billboard opposite, a perfectly obscenity. The slogan reads BE MORE THAN A WANNABE. Twanging at manmade inadequacies, it makes me feel sick. And guilty. I feel sick because I feel guilty. In a split second I evaluate my life which I relive all at once inside my head at dream speed. I am discontented. It works. A faceless suit has a grip on me. A slick ad-man in a smart leather chair in London is exposing my unfulfilment, lifting the lid from a can of worms marked 'lost ambition'. Without asking.

The Herald says 'One Hundred Thousand Dead'. I am immune. One hundred thousand. Dead. I have to feel something, must conjure up an emotional response. Jeez, Little House on the Prairie made me cry for fucks sake. 100,000 bloated bodies and I don't give a shit. Carry on as normal, none of my concern. A pound in the collecting can buys off guilt, absolves me of responsibility.

The fact that I don't care, have an inability to see beyond the end of my own nose, disturbs me.  
One hundred thousand. Dead.

I must imagine.

I empty tubes of Smarties onto the lounge carpet. Then boxes, followed by the contents of cardboard walking sticks, the type you were given at Christmas as a child, with shiny red plastic handles. I begin to count. Am I knee deep or chest deep?

Perhaps they reach high above my head and I drown in a sea of primary coloured covered chocolate. The weight of my head breaks my neck as I struggle against a tidal wave of 100,000 Smarties, like a child drowning in a grain store. I arrange the letters from inside the lids to spell out ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DEAD, in different colours. Indifferent. Smarties fill the room, reach the ceiling, they crack and compound squeezing out the air.

It doesn't help, my mind wanders. I think about orange Smarties and how they were banned from America, try to remember whether that was a true story, or an urban folktale.

I begin to count in bananas again, reaching just over a hundred when the overdue train arrives. I head for a couldn't care less evening of drinking and laughter.

In the pub I am unable to relax, enjoy myself. There is something eating at me and I can't quite put my finger on what it is. It spoils my night.

## WITNESS

Plastic handles cut into my fingers and the bags almost touch the floor, wrenching at my shoulders. I glare at bustling shoppers, daring them to come to close, to just try banging into me and send my carriers into a tourniquet strangling my hands. My jeans hang too heavily choking my waist, clammy, the back of my neck is coated with sweat and my feet are twice their usual size, determined to burst from the leather which envelops them. Should have put my shorts on - bloody weather.

I trudge into the mall and heave the bags over the side of a stray trolley which I wheel towards a bench crowded with gossiping grey pensioners. Bagless people passing the time of day and chatting in community centre fashion. Finding a space at the end of the bench, I sit down and light a cigarette, minding my own business. Determined not to catch a friendless eye should they start smalltalking at me. I am not in the mood, in a bad mood. Can't be bothered politely patronising anyone in the obligatory way, it's too hot.

I am tempted to sit here for hours, dreading the walk home - too short a distance for a bus and not worth risking the wrath of a taxi driver but far enough on foot to leave arm muscles aching long into the following day, when you can't figure out why. Arriving home, collapsing in the door like an end of race athlete through the ribbon, without the glory. Small wonder the surrounding streets are littered with abandoned metal trolleys. Sixty pounds each they cost I heard - a small fortune scattered around the scheme, but nobody bothers, I don't expect there's much of a market for knocked off trolleys.

On the wall opposite the bench, there is a cautionary poster: IT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE TO REMOVE SHOPPING TROLLEYS FROM THE VICINITY OF THE CAR PARK. Of

course it falls on deaf ears - the last of anyones worries, cheaper than a cab, that's for sure.

To my right, the teddy grabbing machine is hugged by high pitched children, being robbed of their pocket money in broad daylight. Supposedly there's knack to it, it's all in the timing. Much as I've tried I've been unable to win anything, the chrome crane claws pathetically at thin air, jolting rudely to a halt. I once saw a man emptying a plastic bag full of multicoloured made in Hong Kong fun fur into the machine, so I expect someone has cracked it - at a cost.

I crush the cigarette under my boot and push the messages towards the exit, where I wait for someone to open the door allowing me to slip out. Before leaving, I hear the familiar tone of a woman shouting at the top of her voice under her breath. Turning my head, trying not to stare because it isn't the done thing, I see the woman bearing over the two boys, carbon copies of one another except for their height, and she's well past the wait till I get you home stage. The eyes of the older boy blink and cringe as she slaps at him, too hard, her hand flailing like something clock work. Wanting to run but too terrified, the boy submits, his younger brother whining and trying in vain to protect by darting in front of him. The boys are well dressed and clean in cheerful shorts and T-shirts, but thin and dark and cowed.

"Move. Stay there. Just wait till I come out." she spits as she slaps, swiping at the boy's body which he tries to shield with a scrawny bruised arm, frustrating her more. She hurls the frame of the younger boy aside, takes a final cuff at the taller boy who sways from foot to foot, somehow rooted and too petrified to duck. Her palm lands a hard blow squarely on his cheek and she marches off, towards a row of stacked trolleys - leaving the boys crying. A pathetic freeze frame.

Shoppers go about their business in a hear, speak, see no evil kind of way. Someone pushes open the door and I dodge outside before it pulls to. Angry with myself.

## Jim Craig

1916

In Flanders' Fields  
the young men died  
in Freedom's sacred cause,  
while nearer home  
their comrades tried  
to enforce their alien laws  
on an Irish population  
determined to be free,  
once more a sovereign nation  
who'd die for liberty.

The I.C.A. and Volunteers  
had come to make a stand,  
they'd cast aside  
their doubts and fears  
to free their native land.  
For seven days  
and seven nights  
against armoured cars and guns,  
the Starry Plough still on its height,  
they fought Britannia's Huns.



At Jacobs' factory and Boland's Mill  
they made the Saxon bleed his fill  
and in the fight  
at Carlisle Bridge  
their loyalty to  
Freedom's pledge  
kept their place,  
in the nation's heart  
for in their death  
they played their part  
for Ireland's Liberty.

## Brian Whittingham

### THE BASRA ROAD

Jack's on the telly  
autographing a Tomahawk Cruise  
as he would  
a plastered leg,  
newsreel smiles  
for the folks  
back home

rat-tat-tat-tat

anti-aircraft guns,  
Christmas light tracer fire  
chill wind sirens

rat-tat-tat-tat

Thunderbolts,  
Tornados and  
Skyhawks  
soar

rat-tat-tat-tat

like  
United Nation Bush

rat-tat-tat-tat  
rat-tat-tat-tat  
rat-tat-tat-tat

Tel Aviv Scuds  
and Silkworms fired  
from Russian Migs  
and French Mirages,  
500  
civilians  
rot  
in a Baghdad bunker  
and Nero-like, Saddam  
scorches on

rat-tat-tat-tat

Hornets,  
Prowlers and  
Tomcats  
fly

rat-tat-tat-tat

flaring oil-wells  
blacken  
ultramarine

rat-tat-tat-tat

centre spread Patriot,  
Sea-Dart and  
Maverick missiles,  
Eagle Comic  
exploded views,  
Dan Dare  
and the Mekons

rat-tat-tat-tat  
rat-tat-tat-tat  
rat-tat-tat-tat

olive green uniforms,  
a scrapyard of  
burnt out shells  
with Kuwaiti trinkets  
the Basra Road  
littered

Dali-style.

## Stephen McGerry

### WHEN IT WILL STOP!

The next time you hear what they call our fighters  
Bloody Sunday, Loughall, Gibraltar, Diplock courts and the  
[Hunger Strikers

The shoot to kill, show trials and State executions  
Remember, it's them who know the real Solutions

The Brits have tried to take our every right  
Another reason to stand up and fight  
For far too long we've suffered injustice and lies  
We'll no longer sit back with just murmurs and sighs

The time has come to take up the gun  
It's now their turn to mourn the loss of sons  
The Brits aren't safe while they decide to stay  
It will only stop on unification day

Some people say that there's another way  
But how do we go about getting a say  
We can't hear our leaders speak in the media  
This rule applies even in 26 county Eire

When Ireland's free and out of British hands  
It's only then they'll lay down their arms  
Until that day the fight goes on  
And we'll show the sticks their ways are wrong

## Hugh Healy

### BEFORE THE KILLING STARTED

Did you see him, wee Mr King?  
Defence Secretary nae less  
went to the Gulf (got a nice tan)  
said brave words to a' our lads  
got his photo ta'en on top o' a tank  
like a real sodger  
wi' a beret and everything

### CAME HOME BEFORE THE KILLING STARTED

Next there was Charlie  
Prince O' Wales an' a' that  
went to the Gulf (a break fae the wife)  
said brave words to a' our lads  
got his photo ta'en on top o' a tank  
like a real sodger  
wi' a beret and everything

### CAME HOME BEFORE THE KILLING STARTED

Then there was John Major  
him fae number ten  
went to the Gulf (as Maggie would)  
said brave words to a' our lads  
got his photo ta'en on top o' a tank  
like a real sodger  
wi' a beret and everything

### CAME HOME BEFORE THE KILLING STARTED

Young Andy Turner from Maryhill Rd.  
joined the army to get off the dole  
went to the Gulf (he hadn't much choice)  
wore his beret wi' pride  
as real sodgers do  
was left cremated in a burnt tank

pity he couldnae come hame

### BEFORE THE KILLING STARTED

## Jack

### God Given Right

Accuser - Male

Accused - Female

Evidence - None

Verdict - Guilty

Judge - Male

Plea - Ignored

Sentence - Death

Executioner - Male

Crime - Witch



## Alex McLarty

### BIRTHDAY GREETINGS TO A YOUNG LESBIAN FRIEND

A person of independent mind  
is worth a thousand o' the ither kind  
wha hum an' haw an' puff and blaw  
an' pretend tae know,  
everything.

"You mustnae dae this, you'll be in a stew.  
Why WE know whit's best for you."

So they say.

But the proble:n is, I find,  
sic folk ha'nea got an independent mind.

An' that's a shame,  
for it's no really their blame.

They've been brainwashed sae lang  
they dinnae ken whit's right or wrang  
about some things.

There's some can be pitied an' wi' patience won oer,  
tae see how ignorant their views were before.

But ithers are hypocrites, o' them beware,  
they say one thing but dae anither.

So enjoy your birthday, wi your independent mind,  
that's worth a thousand o' the ither kind.

Enjoy yourself wi' peace o mind,  
for this year, many new friends you'll find  
tae add tae the happiness you've already found.

## Karen Thomson

### Liberation Be Fuck

I free me

I dont need you

I dont want your

"let's be equal"

Offers

Of limited liberation

Whoever heard of the Captor

Setting the captives free

And meaning it.

### Palestine

Your children

are

clubbed

shot

starved

jailed

exiled

daily

and yet  
they stand as one  
taking on  
the mighty forces of imperialism  
with stones in their hands  
visions of emancipation  
in their eyes  
who remembers the story  
of David and Goliath

### **Kiss**

I need a kiss  
A real kiss  
An unphysical kiss  
that releases  
only  
the darkness of my belly  
It shall be  
an unhidden kiss  
an unprisoned kiss  
an unbarbedwire dream of a kiss  
an impossibility without sight

### **Poem about the Home Office fascists attacking a church in order to deport Viraj Mendis**

They came for you  
as we slept  
from Hurd to Holmes  
Jack-boots shone to perfection  
They wanted you Viraj  
as they wanted Connolly &  
Mandela in their time  
You were  
the whipping boys  
to remind us  
not to overstep  
the fucking mark

What now Viraj?

You dodge nooses in Sri Lanka  
I choke slowly on Silence  
the deportations continue

Life as usual goes on

## Rab Fulton

### poem written in response tae thi deportation o john matthews

noo thit  
michael howard  
is oor nations  
gerdian judge  
n exectionur  
thi state  
isnae satisfied  
wae thi auld  
waye its been  
seen tae be  
soarta daein  
sumhin about  
irish republicin  
bombs in england

thi houndin  
interrin waeoot  
crime nor trial  
o irish faimlies  
n individuals  
fae sheffield  
ti isle o wight  
nae langer suffices  
- thi hingin  
loabbies voice  
in cabinet  
wahnts ti mak  
a real example

wahnts n needs  
a true flesh  
n banes nae  
nonsense cauld  
oan thi slab  
instince o instint  
fast track firm  
british justice

john matthews  
sent ti derry  
media kennin  
eez a terrorist  
hame secretary  
sed so eezsel  
nae evidence  
nae trial  
yit nae doot  
a terrorist

this a new  
waye tae git  
justice done  
usually thi  
namin o names  
is whispirt  
security forces  
simply quietly  
haun info  
about suspectit  
republicin activists  
tae loyal  
extremists then  
seal n secure



thi relivint  
targit area

noo names  
faces places  
o residence  
o ony suspect  
wull be shown  
oan prime time  
international t.v.  
thur wull be  
nae room fur  
ambiquity oar  
doot oar appeal  
hingin judges  
(fuckn shit n  
scum o society)  
hae aye kent  
corpses dinnae  
ask questions

sweet jesus!  
sweet fuck!  
thi voice fur  
democricy cries  
oot fur sumdae  
tae gerd  
these gerdians  
tae judge  
these judges  
tae execute  
these executionurs

## Dorothy Clark

### LONELY LOSER

See since big Tommys went sober.  
Sno use.  
Hivny hud a turn affa him fur chrise knows how long.  
A mean a know ma job.  
Know whit am doin know whit a mean.

So a take a wee drink now and again.  
A can pass massel as well as the next.  
Ask anybody.  
Never ever like big Tommy used ti.  
Chrise he bit a polis dug.

Big Tommys big time now.  
Nae wee corner shops fur him.  
Aw naw.  
Right inti the big stuff.  
Banks an aw that  
an its chester barrys an the rollexs  
an the bee-em-fucken-double yoos.

Whit gets me whit really gets me  
hes that fucken happy.  
Bastarts brain damaged.

Any chance i a drink pal.

## Bobby Christie

### pint ae thi black stuff

runs doon thi throat  
sweet  
guts feel better fur it

cunt ae a price  
fuck  
whit kin yi dae

sit doon quiet  
aw  
jist me n ma pint

### tourist

look in thi eyes  
drunkn bastard  
cannae even staun

fuckn kick him  
disnae feel nothing  
yi oan yur holidays

whit planet yi fae  
no this side ae toon  
two bob gets yi a taxi

walk doon thi road  
wid hiv yi in a minute  
shoes n aw

### talkin

celtic hiv nae chance  
no wae that board

rangers ur jist too good  
even baefore a ball is kicked

its thi last ten years  
fuckn west is so strong

look at this country  
fucks sake kin dae whit they want

see if labour get in  
its stull a lost cause

tell yi petrol bombs  
thats whit wae need

### job fur thi barmaid

bucket n fuckn mop  
tae wash up thi sick

fuckn pricks fuckn men  
cannae hod yir drink

she belts bloody carpet  
thi sick smashes up

intae thi air

## Joe Murray

### I've only one more thing to say to you

...and with your sneering smirk  
at my frustrated anger  
you walk back to your  
desk where you dump *my* life in *your*  
social security filing cabinet  
and eat a water biscuit with your  
    well earned coffee  
which you take black no sugar  
to kid yourself on that you've got  
a special K waistline which you  
haven't           you fat bastard.

### Whit a Bummer

Ah wis staunin wi mah pals...  
hivin a pint, know?  
well, this wee burds shoulder bag  
wis ticklin mah bum.  
so, Ah made a joke aboot it  
an we aw laughed.  
see when she wis leavin the pub  
she came ower n felt ma bum  
n made a wee crack,  
n we aw laughed again.  
bit, see when Ah went tae  
buy the next round...  
ma wallit wis away.

## Paul Birtill

### The Lavatory Attendant

Goes to work  
at his own convenience  
angry and demoralized  
sits on a stool  
and dreams of nice places...

In they trickle  
Coughing spitting  
    Splashing about  
I take out a book  
but it doesn't help...

The smell is awful  
The clients surly  
Can't bear to eat my  
sandwich. If only  
I'd passed an exam  
or two this job is hell..

There's sick on the floor  
and a couple are screwing  
in a cubicle I should  
really say something  
but what's the point  
    This isn't a job  
    it's an insult...



5-30 the shitting  
and pissing is over  
time to lock up  
My clothes stink  
and I just want to  
get drunk...

### from Two Short Love Poems

. Lazy

How can I fall in love  
I can't even muster the  
energy to clean out the toilet

## Jim McSharry

### LITTLE BIT OF LOVE

Life is often strange  
when it comes to  
push and shove

But never is it stranger  
when it comes down to love

Some guys go out dancin  
in armani shirts  
lookin fur wuman  
or chasin bitsa skirt

Some guys take up drinkin  
and bevy till it hurts  
fancy aw the barmaids  
as drunkenly they flirt

And herein lies a warning  
about love  
its cost  
and strife

if yer lookin fur ah a wuman  
or mibbe just a wife  
it's better  
to have loved  
and lost

Than been a wanker  
aw yer life!

## John Malley

### Imitation of Life

I am the black maid's daughter,  
I pass for white, deny my colour  
for a safe passage in an ugly  
world, undo myself, living a lie.  
I wear this mask, heavy as iron,  
vanquished by a vicious taboo,  
a tongue with no voice, a heart  
without love, dying for survival.  
One day freedom will find me,  
weeping for my big black mammy,  
I know now she prays for me,  
awaits with flowers my arrival.

### Passionlessness

I have not the vocabulary, nor  
courage, for that thing called  
love, flights of fancy sail up  
above me, I ignore the barrage,  
the blaze in my undercarriage.  
Passion is my crushed, dried  
flower, tucked tight in a dog-  
eared book, oh I dare not look.  
Let me go quietly, though my  
knickers be sodden, a Scotched  
corpse in a sexual Culloden.

## Gay In GLasgow

First, it's frank to say that from myself  
in this fair city I've been a fugitive,  
running scared in Roy Orbison's blue vein,  
my love and locale loathed and laughed at.  
Second, let it be allowed aloud my mouth  
is mine to sing songs of sex, pro-creation,  
to nurture every fruity and nutty nuance,  
yet still to feel at home in my own nation.  
Third, I'd like to think that I can count  
on being more than tholed, I'd be thankful  
if I could share the fruits of the flight  
to have our stolen lives and stories told.  
Glasgow and me, steeped in stormy blether,  
let we two struggle and flourish together.

### Langston

I wandered lonely as a closet gay,  
the shrinking violet with bright  
ideas, cowardly lion with knocking  
knees and the quiet desperation  
of a mad and masturbatory me  
generation. Wasn't I vicious front  
page gutter news? I found Langston  
Hughes, counting blessings, singing  
dream boogies and battling blues,  
a darker brother who ate in kitchens,  
Klan fire, American heartbreak.  
Was he just a boy stealing stars  
from a Harlem sky? I will struggle,  
strive, sing. Song is a strong thing.

## Janet Finlayson

### HILLS TO THE SEA

We settle on hill of materialistic gadgets, and think we are on top of the world. We think we have succeeded in creativity, but we have destroyed nature's own creations. As durability fails against the competitiveness of modern demand, we throw it from the hills to the sea. One day we'll no longer keep our heads above water, and drown in all mod cons.

### from PSYCHOLOGY

Question - If Matthew can not read or write, and is from such an ignorant background, how is he so well-read in sciences, prophecies, and extra-terrestrials? How does he have such a great knowledge of this planet, when his psychotic mind spends very little time actually on it?

## Carolyn Hodgman

### Flat

In my flat,  
I live my flat life,  
Feeling flat love,  
or is it convenience.

Through my venetian bars,  
Half closed,  
My eyes,  
My brain,  
My deepest emotion,

I see the ground  
From the dangerously placed  
16th floor window.  
Dangerously placed for me,  
And my half closed closed emotions.

## Jane Harris

### A DIFFERENT VEIN

She marks the chapters in life  
with haircuts. This latest phase  
merits a trim, a new stylist  
for a different vein

Keith  
makes her stand, punishment  
for not wanting the works  
pecks forever at the fringe  
clips with

are you working yourself?  
somewhere special the night?

she sets her jaw  
is silent  
every so often  
his fingers brush  
her nipples, something taught  
at hairschoool

how's that for you?

Keith bobs  
swivels a mirror  
and for the first time  
she sees the scars  
in each wrist,  
puncture points at intervals  
where they tacked him up

great  
she lies and roots  
for a monster tip

can you sort my lady?  
her jacket and that?  
Keith closets himself

thirty-six

seven minutes  
to watch the curl of smoke  
on a silkcut

**Graham Fulton**

### **ACCIDENTAL ANARCHISTS**

The anarchist  
is here. He  
is probing  
his right nostril  
with the pinkie of  
his right hand,  
digging  
with a rare passion,  
pulling it out  
and looking before  
he pops  
the treasure into his mouth  
or wipes  
it on the leg of the chair  
asserting his right  
to choose.

And the night fills  
with sloppy crusaders,  
wild explorers  
who spend life  
cutting toenails over the carpet,  
cracking knuckles, chewing skin,  
doing glorious desperate things,

thirty-seven

stealing books, smoking on trains,  
making strange noises with their eyelids,  
mining for wax, erupting plukes,  
dropping napkins  
onto the floor  
praying  
to gods  
    who spend life  
belching, spitting, snoring, swearing,  
breaking wind in public places,  
taking a bath as the world burns, discussing  
the weather the end

of  
it  
all -  
vaginas, penises, judges, crooks  
doing enchanting unsound things,  
laughing at funerals, giggling in hospitals,  
paddling in October detergent,  
carving arrows, hearts  
on trees,  
watching  
swans  
glide between  
the lemonade crate

and traffic cone  
for this is  
all there is  
on our galloping ball of a big rock.  
The right  
to pop  
it into

our mouths  
or wipe it on  
the leg of the chair.  
Be  
drunk  
beneath a Cheshire cat moon,  
pillars of unacceptable standards,  
beautiful monsters of imperfection.

## Tony Palumbo

### LOOKING FOR A VOICE TO TELL THEIR STORY

An iron girder crashed down upon a taxi in Wales,  
killing the driver;  
The darkened eyes of the smart ties behind the news-  
desk hardened in disapproval  
of the men who had thrown the girder,  
and softened in a smiling tribute for the driver who  
had run the daily gauntlet of striking miners,  
and for the passenger going back to work;  
A leather truncheon crashed down upon the head  
of a picket,  
who had run the daily gauntlet of police-vans,  
police-horses and riot shield,  
in defence of his comrades, jobs and family.  
His blackened lungs too weak to call for help  
as he crumpled to the ground in anonymity;  
Who told his story?



A bomb explodes in a mess-hall full of British soldiers  
 serving in Northern Ireland;  
 the photographs of smiling faces on the front pages,  
 taken at a recent wedding reception,  
 framed inside dark-rimmed spectacles of public grief,  
 and viewed through the eye-glass of a single purpose.  
 Give us the image of a happy young bride, now a widow.  
 Beside her tall, handsome young 'groom, now a victim  
 of the bomb,  
 and fill the reader with revulsion at the thought  
 of Irish freedom;  
 A young Irishman is tortured inside a British  
 army-barracks  
 by the well-used techniques of the security forces,  
 then is held inside a West Belfast police-station cell,  
 behind the locked doors and closed mouths of the RUC,  
 under laws which hold him framed without trial:  
 Who tells his story?

Black youths rioting on a farm in inner London  
 hacked a policeman to death.

The words and scripts of the newsreaders shook  
 with horror  
 in their description of Keith Blakelock, defender and  
 victim of his own law,  
 as he lay under the dim, one-eyed scrutiny of a  
 policeman's torch,  
 magnified to the nations' eyes in adjectives of outrage  
 and shock;  
 A black boy is beaten up in an inner city street,  
 by the boots and fists of white law and order,  
 for being in possession of a colour, a name and  
 an accent,  
 and is driven to a police station

to be quizzed about drugs he doesn't know the name  
 and colour of.

As he sits under the blinding, white glare of a lamp  
 in an ill-lit room;  
 Who tells his story?

Prisoners rioted in a Scottish jail and took a prison  
 warden hostage.

The herd's inflated bellows,  
 Blowing through bombastic pronouncements dictated  
 to its blacksmiths,

aired its warm praise for the bravery of warden  
 Jackie Stewart,

And vented its angry blast against the men who had  
 humiliated him,

and caused him such pain,  
 by holding him hostage in a stinking, crowded,  
 locked cell

and giving him a taste of the system which feeds him;  
 A man, stripped of his name and branded with a number,  
 and clothed and marked in the memories and the stigma  
 which will stain him forever,  
 suffers injury and humiliation

While he lives in the filth, and eats the filth, that  
 the state provides

As his Punishment for getting in the way of twelve  
 impatient people,

who rushed the decision that locked him up  
 and handed him over as a hostage to the State,  
 so they could get on with their freedom;

Who tells his story?

The truth of the State is challenged by the sword of  
renegade truth;

Police, army, prison guards, cower under the media's  
blanket.

And they dim our eyes and dull our ears with the shades  
of their camera-lens.

The soporific drone of their talking-machine,  
which pulls a screen before our eyes,  
and drowns out the cries of renegades  
whenever the truth of the State is beaten into them by  
the brutal honesty of its batons;

Who will tell their story and lend a voice to their  
silent plight?

Who will fight, to ensure that the victims of the  
State's violence,  
and of our own silence, don't sink in hail of bullets,  
words and apathy?

While our senses are dulled, we are lulled into a  
dormant calm,  
by the sham of a free society:  
Wake up, and tell their story.

## C. A. Baldock

### WHITE FEATHER, WHITE FLAG

Why is it, as we tiptoe through the minefield of Life  
trying to avoid pain and distress,  
behaving ourselves as best we can,  
minding our business,  
whenever we breathe a sigh of relief,  
and imagine that we've got it made,  
out jumps Fate from an ambush  
holding a bloody great hand grenade.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Alison Reid lives in East Kilbride and writes for the Bread & Circuses performance poetry group.

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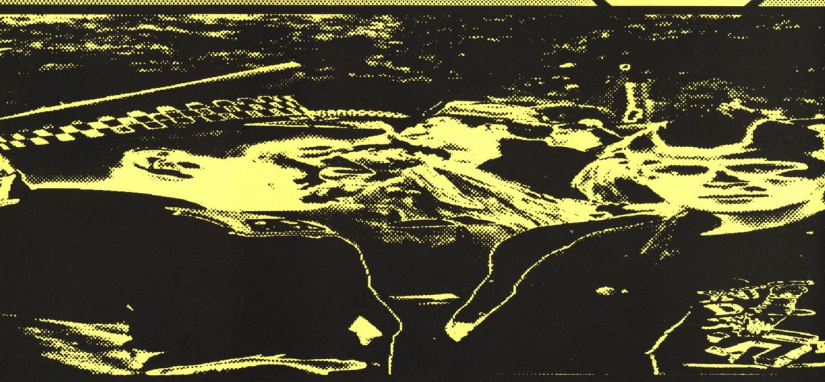
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Paul Birtill

Bobby Christie

Janet Finlayson

Rab Fulton

Graham Fulton

John Malley

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